

lege of speaking three hours. They ought to take it as a grace, and not as a subject of complaint. It will go upon the record that they have allowed the minority a three hours speech, and curtailed their own members to thirty minutes. If there is any complaint to be made, it ought to come from the majority.

The rule is offered for the purpose of getting along with the business, to enable us to get through with it. It has been said the thing is unheard of. Have they not the hour rule in Congress? Is that an abridgement of the freedom of speech? I think the early history of the proceedings of the Continental Congress will show that a fifteen minute rule was used there. What is the effect of such a rule? It is to compel members to condense their thoughts. It is to prevent this skirmishing to which the gentleman from Somerset (Mr. Dennis) refers. I am opposed to being eternally engaged in skirmishing. If the war that is now being waged was waged in continual skirmishes, there never would be a decisive battle. Let blows come thick and heavy, and let them be confined to thirty minutes. Let the gist of the argument be given, and it can be brought before us in that time. The gentleman from Baltimore county (Mr. Berry) says it is impossible for some of us to get to a subject in sixty minutes. I tell him as the gentleman from Cecil (Mr. Scott) did, that if he cannot reach it in sixty minutes, he will never reach it at all, but will wander around in continual darkness, and end where he began. Let gentlemen collect their thoughts, and condense them. Let them think over what they have to say, and they can say it in thirty minutes upon any subject. They can give a fair and distinct outline. They can give reasons for the faith that is in them.

I am utterly opposed to cumbering the records of this Convention with these interminable speeches; for they will be volumes so ponderous that our posterity will never read them. It is barely possible that gentlemen may have an eye to posterity in making these long speeches. They may wish to put themselves on the record, so that succeeding generations may learn what erudition they had, and how profoundly they understood the subject. Of course, information is always useful. But then we have the original books to which the speakers refer, and we can hunt them up for ourselves. It is not necessary eternally to repeat the same arguments here. We can get them in our reports; we can get them in the Federalist; we can get them in treatises on democracy or on the science of government. Those arguments need not be continually reproduced here. We want fair play. Therefore I am in favor of the amendment to confine the speakers to thirty minutes, and that the speakers of the majority and the minority shall alternate. That gives us fair play. We shall listen to one on that

side and then they shall listen to one on ours. Heretofore the argument has been all upon that side. They have absolutely taken up the time of the Convention, and the majority have not been heard. They have spoken until the physical endurance of the gentleman from Cecil has been exhausted, in one continuous strain, while the mouths of the majority have been hermetically sealed.

Mr. CLARKE. I begged the gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Stirling) to take the floor, and I did not go on until he had refused four or five times.

Mr. NEGLEY. Perhaps a three hour speech from our side would have been as rambling. The way to remedy the difficulty and obtain concentration is to adopt this order.

Mr. SCOTT. The physical endurance of the gentleman from Cecil has not yet been exhausted. I was endeavoring to guard against the exhaustion of the physical endurance of the speakers.

Mr. NEGLEY. I am glad to hear that my friend has such a powerful physical constitution. I must confess I am afraid I shall give way under it, and some others may. But by the adoption of this rule, we may certainly be heard all around. I think that another of our rules ought to be enforced, that no member shall speak twice on any subject until all those that have not spoken shall have been heard. I think that is fair. I am perfectly willing there should be fair play, and that what is sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander. I am entirely opposed to their taking up all the time with their speeches, not giving us an equal chance. If this rule is adopted, it will give us an equal privilege, and therefore I am in favor of it.

Mr. ABBOTT. At the suggestion of my friends, I will modify my amendment by striking out the restriction to twenty minutes, and leave merely the alternation.

Mr. STIRLING. We have a rule of the Convention, under which it is the duty of the Chair to decide who shall have the floor.

The PRESIDENT. When a gentleman takes the floor, the Chair presumes that the House acquiesces in his speaking, unless there is objection offered.

Mr. ABBOTT withdrew his amendment.

Mr. NEGLEY. Then I will move to amend the order by adding the words, "and that the speakers of the majority and minority alternate."

The PRESIDENT. That is the parliamentary rule now.

Mr. BELT. The parcelling of the floor between the majority and minority I think would better be arranged by a common understanding. It is proper that there should be an alternate discussion, for many reasons. Let it be understood that after a gentleman from one side is through, the Chair shall award the floor to some one on the opposite side. That is the safest and best mode of ar-